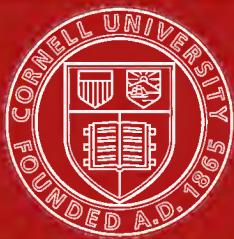


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PAMPHLET NUMBER TEN

READING, PENNSYLVANIA

**Report on a Survey
of the
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Prepared for
The Chamber of Commerce of Reading
by the
New York Bureau of Municipal Research
APRIL, 1914
REVIEWED, JANUARY 1915

10 CENTS

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BOARD OF EDUCATION

SUMMARY OF CRITICISMS AND CONSTRUCTIVE SUGGESTIONS

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.

The small school board of nine members tends towards prompt dispatch of business, minimized routine and increased activity by individual members.

The committee system makes it possible for each director to participate in at least two varieties of school work.

The organization of the board makes special provision for enforcing the compulsory attendance law and for the medical inspection of school children.

The difference in educational needs of boys and girls is recognized in the organization of separate high schools.

The provision of separate supervisors for lower and upper grades is an effective means of meeting the peculiar problems presented by the primary and advanced grades of the school course.

Special provision is made for the supervision of instruction in music, drawing, manual training, household arts, physical culture and for giving attention to the needs of pupils who are not normal.

Small libraries in all grade-rooms and well organized high school libraries make it possible for all pupils to extend the range of their reading interest beyond the text-book covers.

EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION.

There is opportunity for improving the method of handling correspondence, office routine, particularly clerical matters, and requests for information which needlessly interrupt the work of office heads and clerks.

A more efficient clerical organization is needed to deal with detail matters and relieve higher officials.

Provision is made for keeping Reading's school authorities currently informed as to the progress of events and the trend of discussion in educational matters throughout the country in that one of the supervisors is delegated to the task of scanning educational journals and marking articles which are submitted to the superintendent for distribution among the supervisory and teaching staff. The further services of a clipping bureau and the assignment of this work to a clerk would improve this important phase of school administration.

The teachers of Reading fail to appreciate by sufficient use the excellent library provided for them in the administration building.

There is need of a more systematic organization and more efficient clerical service in performing all functions relating to the gathering of

statistics from the schools, assembling and presenting statistics to the school board and superintendent and in making it possible for the school authorities to study and use statistics to the further advantage of the schools.

Information concerning the schools is gathered from time to time as requests are received, thus needlessly interrupting the regular work of teachers. All necessary data should be assembled systematically at the beginning or end of the school year or term and filed for use as needed.

As an important industrial centre, with many of its citizens employed in knitting and in the iron and steel mills, Reading does not provide, as many cities do, sufficient vocational schools, departments and part-time trade instruction for employees on a scale commensurate with local opportunity. A vocational council has recently been appointed and is working along the lines of studying pupils' vocational aptitudes and encouraging those who have left day-school to attend night-school.

EDUCATIONAL RECORDS.

For want of sufficient efficiency records there is a lack of definite data to support supervisors' statements of opinion regarding the quality of teaching done in the schools.

Because of lack of definite records of teachers' work, opportunities are lost of bringing the methods and results of conspicuously successful teachers to the attention of the weaker members of the staff; this now depends upon the personal suggestion of the superintendent.

Failure to require detailed reports and records of teachers' visits to other schools prevents the results of observation and experience of visitors from reaching the entire force.

Through teachers' councils and a principals' council opportunity is afforded for bringing complaints and suggestions to the attention of the superintendent.

An annual suggestion list is received by the superintendent from each teacher; this list is, for the most part, merely an enumeration of supplies and books wanted with only an occasional suggestion for the betterment of existing conditions; the ratio of the supply and book requests to actual suggestions could be reversed in order to make this list correspond to its name.

Teachers' class registers, as supplied by the state, require needless re-writing of teachers' names and clerical work; the forms are both incomplete and cumbersome; the state school authorities agree

, leaving a blank space in
: State Department, leads
to confusion and inaccuracy in attendance statistics.

At the time of the survey the method of transferring attendance data from school reports to central office record books required unnecessary work; the superintendent discarded the large office record book about November, 1914, substituting for it separate sheets of smaller and more handy size.

In the spring of 1914 the superintendent inaugurated a vocational council which includes in its plan the prevention of premature withdrawal from school; this is a step towards a much-needed campaign against losses from school.

Reports as to the number of pupils who are too old, too young, or of

normal age for their respective grades fail to represent actual facts. Over age should not be regarded as synonymous with retardation (as in the case of many cities including Reading), and should not be tabulated without reference to the length of time pupils have been in school, to the previous failures of pupils still in school and to the pupils who have left school.

Teachers have no adequate desk room or filing cabinets for keeping record books and cards; the superintendent contemplates arranging for special spaces and drawers in desks to effect this improvement.

CARE OF BUILDINGS

At the time of the survey:

Dry cloths, instead of oiled or dampened clothes were used in dusting.

Sweeping mixtures are not used in most of the elementary schools.

Antiquated flushing devices were used in some toilets.

Sanitary drinking fountains provided only in newer buildings.

Classroom temperatures noted ranging from 65 to 80 degrees.

In January, 1915:

Oiled clothes used in dusting.

All have been removed during summer of 1914.

Installed in all schools during summer of 1914.

Remedial experiments in progress in all buildings.

FINANCIAL RECORDS.

The value of the budget estimates would be increased if the estimates for salaries and for general expenses were presented with the same amount of detailed supporting data as are the estimates for repairs and supplies.

Estimates should show the nature of the contemplated service, together with the cost of like or similar services in previous years.

Payroll procedure could be much facilitated by the introduction of labor-saving mechanical devices and other improvements in the secretary's office.

Collection of school taxes with other municipal taxes would result in a considerable reduction of expenses.

A record of current prices kept by the secretary would result in economies in the purchase of supplies.

The forms of requisitions now in use puts a premium on the purchase and withdrawal of supplies not urgently needed. A purchasing system similar to that in use by the City of Reading is recommended.

The installation of a proper card record of supplies used in each school would do away with two sets of books now kept by the superintendent of supplies.

The accounts kept by the secretary should be classified (1) on a functional basis, showing cost of administration, supervision, instruction, operation, maintenance and capital acquisition; and (2) by schools so as to show the cost of running each school.

Established classifications should be followed in practice.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

CRITICISMS AND CONSTRUCTIVE SUGGESTIONS ON ADMINISTRATION, MAINTENANCE AND RECORDS

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

THE BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS.

Reading's public school system is under the control of a board of school directors of nine members, constituting the board of education. There are four standing committees, each of three members, as follows:

- Teachers and instruction
- Supplies
- Property and sanitation
- Finances and accounts

At the head of the work of instruction is a superintendent of schools who is assisted by a general supervisor and a corps of seven supervisors. One oversees the work of teachers in the lower grades, one is responsible for the work of the upper grade teachers, while the others have direct charge of music, drawing and writing, practical arts, cooking and physical education.

The two high schools and the new Douglass and Weiser elementary school each have a principal responsible to the superintendent of schools. In the 44 other elementary schools, one teacher designated as "principal" is nominally in charge but without relief from teaching.

A normal training school provides for the special training of candidates for teaching positions.

The enforcement of the compulsory attendance law is the duty of an attendance officer.

A medical inspector, assisted by three assistant inspectors and four nurses, has the task of detecting and treating the physical defects of school children.

A clerk directly responsible to the superintendent of schools works in all the offices in the administration building. He prepares regular and special reports for presentation at board meetings; gathers information for the superintendent of schools; sends out notices from the superintendent to the schools; assembles special information in answer to written requests; performs stenographic services; receives callers, and attends to the telephone. The general supervisor and other supervisors assist in this general clerical work.

While the educational affairs are attended to by the superintendent of schools and the officers responsible to him, business matters are handled by officers directly responsible to the board, although the superintendent participates actively in all business matters.

The care of buildings and the purchase of buildings, equipment and fuel is under the direction of a superintendent of buildings, who is responsible for the work of fifty-six janitors.

The secretary keeps the accounts, acts as purchasing agent, and serves as clerk to the committee on finance and accounts and the committee on property and sanitation. He is assisted by a stenographer who is also engaged in the work of keeping attendance reports.

A woman superintendent of supplies is responsible for the care and distribution of supplies.

The duties of the treasurer and of the tax receiver are sufficiently indicated by their titles.

ADMINISTRATION ORGANIZATION HAS FEATURES MAKING FOR EFFICIENCY.

The small board facilitates school administration and lessens the chances for cumbrous routine. It is easier to call a meeting of nine men than to assemble twenty or more. Clerical work is more simple and economical when notices and correspondence can be sent to a smaller number of persons.

The assignments to committees are such that each member serves on two of the four committees. This tends to prevent a director's experience and knowledge being limited to a single phase of school work.

By means of an attendance officer, aided by a system of card records, special administrative provision is made for the enforcement of the compulsory attendance law.

By means of a separately organized laboratory and medical staff special administrative provision is made for the medical inspection of school children.

The organization of the high schools provides a system of secondary education distinctly specialized and separate from the grammar school system.

A recognition of the divergent needs of boys and girls is found in the organization of the high schools into entirely separate institutions for

s is not here advocated as the
n as the best way to solve it.
i for Reading is clearly beyond

Separate supervisors are provided for primary and upper grade work. This enables each supervisor to keep in more intimate touch with her particular problem than is possible in organizations in which the responsibilities of one supervisor are distributed over all grades.

Special supervisors are provided for music, drawing, manual training, household arts and physical culture. This provision tends to keep teachers up to the mark in subjects easily neglected. Provision has been made for giving special attention to children who are mentally defective or otherwise not normal. The regular teacher is thus relieved of responsibility for such pupils as are a hindrance to the rest of the class, and they are placed where their peculiar needs can be served most effectively.

Elementary school rooms are provided with reference books for supplementary reading. Eighth grade rooms are equipped with revolving bookcases. Both high schools have well organized libraries, with a modern cataloging system.

With respect to the features enumerated above, the organization of the Reading school system as such is adequate. It must be remembered that adequate organization does not necessarily insure adequate results. For example, while this report comments favorably upon the fact that special classes have been provided, it expresses no opinion as to whether those classes are properly conducted or whether they produce the desired results. To determine the efficiency of this work, a survey of the teaching itself would be necessary.

The present organization of Reading's school system has its shortcomings as well as its commendable features. Attention is invited to consideration of certain particulars wherein there is opportunity for improvement.

Visitors, telephone calls and letters calling for information constantly interrupt office heads and employees.

Superintendents of schools throughout the country, interested in their own problems, are in the habit of sending questionnaires broadcast over the land in the hope of receiving a sufficient number of replies to enable them to draw valid conclusions. The usual practice of any superintendent receiving such a questionnaire is to drop his regular work, look up the information himself and send it away on the original question sheet. When another request for the same information comes in sometime later from some other superintendent, it becomes necessary to repeat the performance.

Such is the case in Reading. In addition to written requests, frequent telephoned requests and callers interrupt the regular work of the supervisors and clerks at the administration building. Nothing prevents callers, who come to ask for trivial information, from wandering into offices and wasting the time of comparatively high-salaried officers. The entire method of handling information in the administration building should be put upon a businesslike basis. A simple system of recording and preserving information collected for one inquirer should be installed, so as to accumulate data from which answers may be obtained for any subsequent requests. An employee should be stationed to receive and direct callers, so as to reduce interruptions and intrusions to a minimum. The spirit in which this recommendation is made gives full consideration to the fact that every school employee should be at the service of any parent, taxpayer, or other citizen who is interested in any matter affecting the public schools. The public should be educated, however, through the press and by circular letters, to an appreciation of the fact that it is to their interest to save the time of the public's high-salaried officers from petty intrusions.

A special clerk should be provided in the central office organization to keep the school authorities currently informed as to educational matters throughout the country.

The superintendent of schools keeps a scrap book of clippings relating to Reading and clippings relating to board meetings are preserved in envelopes, but there is no adequate clipping file of general educational news. Because of the want of such a file the school authorities are laboring

without the aid of a vast fund of educational information for the dissemination of which several of the country's newspapers are publishing special pages.

The superintendent states that teachers subscribe to educational magazines on the average of one and one-third periodicals to each teacher; also that it is one of the duties of one of the supervisors to read through educational magazines, mark articles and arrange them for distribution among teachers. It would greatly enhance the worth of what is described as the present practice, if the scanning of the periodicals could be done by a trained clerk instead of a supervisor, and if some of the more valuable articles read by the teachers could be filed at the central offices where all might benefit from the observation and reading of the teacher who happened upon something valuable. It is important that this phase of school work by teachers and officers alike receive the greatest possible encouragement in order that they may have the benefit of the latest word in country-wide educational movements.

The great strides taken in modern educational effort, as well as the extent of school experimentation, make it impossible for the supervisors and teachers in any city to keep informed without the aid supplied by those various sources of information. The superintendent states that board members as well subscribe to these educational magazines. With this beginning it would be an easy matter to give Reading the sort of provision for assembling out-of-town information which every up-to-date school system should have, and in respect to which Reading is at the present time far from modern, even though marked articles may be found in the offices. It should be noted that the superintendent has made a large number of surveys on special branches of school work, which have been printed from time to time and distributed locally and throughout the country. Reading schools in consequence have received frequent comment in educational journals.

TEACHERS' LIBRARY.

An excellent teachers' library is maintained at the administration building, but the value of this library would be greatly increased if the organization's teachers are free to use a hat the teachers' use of the

EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND RECORDS

The organization of the work of gathering information from schools is inadequate.

The central office requires information from teachers for reports to the superintendent of schools, board of education and the state and national bureaus of education. Practically all the information necessary for these reports could be furnished at the beginning of the term by means of a general information card giving the information about a pupil customarily required for school reports.

As now conducted, the work of gathering information from schools not only imposes an unnecessary burden upon teachers, but also makes needless work for supervisors and clerks at the administration building.

RESPECTS IN WHICH ADEQUACY OR INADEQUACY OF ORGANIZATION IS AN OPEN QUESTION.

In addition to the instances of positive adequacy and inadequacy mentioned above, attention is invited to a few phases of Reading's school organization, where a more detailed investigation would be required to determine definitely whether the present organization is adequate.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS.

Each elementary school is under the direction of a teacher who is nominally the principal. These teachers are not charged with the task of going from room to room throughout the school day to inspect the work of teachers and to give such criticisms, counsel or such other aid as may be required. Except for signing certain school reports and receiving visitors, "principals" are regular teachers who devote practically all of their time to their own classes.

For the number of teachers in Reading, most other cities would employ, in addition to the supervisors, about twenty principals as the administrative heads of schools. As a matter of organization alone, Reading might be regarded as having an inadequate staff to look after the efficiency of teachers' work. But this is by no means certain, since in other cities principals commonly spend a large share of their time in clerical work and even the time which they do spend in the classrooms is interrupted so much as to minimize the value of the help the teachers actually receive. An analysis of a typical "principal's" time program shows how little positive help is given to the teaching staff.

This state of affairs presents an interesting problem, which may be stated as follows: Are Reading's teachers doing as good teaching *without* principals as teachers elsewhere are doing *with* principals?

This can only be determined by a survey of the actual classroom work of a majority of Reading's teachers—an investigation not undertaken in the survey here reported.

CLERICAL WORK AT ADMINISTRATION BUILDING.

Still another phase of the organization presents a problem which requires further investigation to determine whether it is adequate or inadequate. This is the question as to whether the present corps of employees is adequate to the work required. During the examiner's stay in the administration building it appears that there was an apparent overburdening of the office staff of the superintendent of schools, so far as time is concerned. A complete analysis of all office work should determine whether this is due to the amount of work required or to the manner of performing it. The work of the board of education should also be analyzed to determine whether too much of the time of the directors is being spent on

clerical details instead of on the larger questions of administrative policy.

There are indications of inefficiency in the clerical and supervising staff which should deal with many matters that now occupy the time and energy of the superintendent and members of the board. This condition calls for a definite and a more adequate organization for all routine work at the administration building.

READING HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNAE ALONE ELIGIBLE FOR APPOINTMENT AS TEACHERS.

The system of appointing new teachers presents another interesting problem. All grade teachers must be graduates of the Reading Girls' High School, though they may receive their professional training elsewhere. Whether the results of this system are satisfactory can only be determined by a survey of the actual teaching work done by Reading's teachers in the classroom. Whatever the situation, the board and the superintendent of schools should know it. This is an additional reason for keeping records of teachers' efficiency, which are detailed and complete enough to be of value.

The work of upper and lower grade teachers should be studied as two separate groups to determine the effect of selecting upper grade teachers from those who have been successful in the lower grades.

MORE COMPLETE AND DEFINITE TEACHERS' EFFICIENCY RECORDS NEEDED.

The grade supervisors go about from school to school passing judgment upon the work of teachers, making memoranda, but no adequate permanent records as to the results of their observations. This means that the question of efficiency of the entire teaching force is determined largely upon the basis of the unrecorded opinions of the supervisors.

Teachers' records on file show the date of appointment and the different schools in which the teachers have taught. Attention is called to the fact that a definite record of the work of each teacher is necessary, because the

..... hinges upon the character of the
..... accomplish results in spite of many
..... ndo all that can be done by the
..... and energetic school board and
..... it.

THE SCHOOL.....
..... of schools are without sufficient
..... information as to what kind of teaching Reading's teachers are doing without
..... principals in the schools and what different results, if any, are accomplished
..... through principals in other cities. Items of information contained in existing
..... records under the heading "remarks," were the exception rather than the
..... rule and even when they appeared were very indefinite. Such as these
..... records are, the superintendent states that he examines them once each
..... month. If a record of teachers' work is worthy of the superintendent's time
..... each month, it is a pity not to have such a record contain a sufficient amount
..... of definite information to be of actual use, which cannot be said of Reading's
..... present records.

Score cards of teachers' efficiency should be used by supervisors and blank forms should be installed to show the results of all supervisory visits by the general and other supervisors. Once assembled, all these criticisms of teachers' work should be made the subject of a half-yearly examination of the entire teaching situation by the superintendent of schools. The teachers would learn from the results of this study exactly what are their shortcomings, for the criticisms of the entire term and of the whole school year should be placed in each teacher's hands regularly as a matter of current routine record procedure.

One of the supervisors stated that the defects in teaching noted in the course of class-room visitation are recorded in a memorandum book. The supervisor examines these books before a teachers' meeting and discusses the more important forms. Each teacher then takes such admonitions to heart as may apply in her case.

In order to secure a definite idea of the value of a teacher's service the following card is recommended as one which has been used in 131 cities in 33 states and in Newfoundland.

FAVORABLE COMMENT ON TEACHERS' WORK.

An examination of this card will demonstrate that it is a constructive aid to the teacher and supervisor and not a device for recording adverse criticism. In fact, the comments and facts resulting from any systematic record of the quality of teaching would by no means yield only unfavorable comment. It is important that the work of teachers who are conspicuously successful in certain subjects or in use of certain methods, be made a matter of definite record. No such special record is kept; and without it countless opportunities to help struggling teachers by example as well as precept are lost.

Reading teachers should be classified into three groups:

1. Conspicuously successful.

2. Generally satisfactory.

3. Unsatisfactory teachers constituting special problems for supervisors.

A special, though by no means complicated set of records, should be kept of the work of each class of teachers. It is particularly important that the work of successful teachers be brought to the attention of weaker teachers.

RECORDS OF TEACHERS' VISITS SHOULD GIVE TO ALL THE BENEFIT OF THE EXPERIENCE OF ONE...

As is the custom in all progressive city school systems, teachers have the privilege of spending one or more days of the school year in classes taught by their colleagues in the same city or in neighboring cities. The benefits of this practice are self-evident to all alert educators; and the greatest good resulting from such visits is the impression or inspiration unconsciously received by the visitor, and the satisfaction felt by the hostess at having helped a fellow-member of the profession. It is also clear that the results of such visits cannot be fully expressed in the form of any mere tabulation and that the justification of the time spent in visiting cannot be determined by the usual formal report of the visitor. It is equally clear that in the course of such visits observations are made, methods are discovered, books and

articles of professional interest are mentioned, and numerous facts are ascertained, all of which would be as valuable to the other teachers as to the one making the visit.

The teachers and principals of any large city always have a considerable number of important facts as a result of their visits, and the assembling of this information, latent in the memory of the many members of the teaching force, into an organized statement suited to administrative purposes will always prove sufficiently valuable to justify the time spent in the procedure.

Reading teachers make no detailed reports of visits and thus no one is helped but the parties concerned. Blanks should be devised and installed to preserve this information, the value of which cannot be overestimated. Such records show, for example, in one city that 163 teachers saw 341 effective schemes for doing 45 different sorts of school work as follows:

Methods used in teaching arithmetic.....	38
Text-books used (name of author and title given).....	28
Methods used in obtaining good discipline.....	28
Methods used in teaching reading.....	27
Group arrangement.....	21
Methods used in teaching spelling.....	16
Phonics	14
Methods used in helping backward children.....	12
Methods used to arouse pupils' interest.....	12
Good methods of questioning.....	11
Blackboard work.....	10
Methods used in teaching geography.....	10
Means of promoting parents' interest.....	10
Reviews	8
Methods of presentation.....	8
Preception cards	8
Foreign classes.....	8
Methods used in teaching grammar.....	7
Methods used in teaching history.....	7
Methods used in teaching music.....	7
Small chairs for younger children.....	7
.....	6
.....	5
.....	4
.....	3
ed.....	3
.....	3
Various observations	20

TEACHERS' TENURE OF OFFICE..

The teachers of the city have served since the time of their appointment, as here noted:

	Appointed	No. of Teachers	Years of Service
	Before 1880	11%	Over 33
	1880-1889	9	23-33
	1890-1899	26	13-23
	1900-1909	29	2-12
	1910-1913	25	0-3

With all due appreciation of the inestimable value of long years of service, an investigation should be made to determine the number, if any, of teachers who are superannuated and no longer able to give efficient service. The superintendent states that in 1914 he had this situation well in hand by reason of it being made possible to retire such teachers.

TEACHERS' SUGGESTIONS FOR THE BETTERMENT OF THE SCHOOLS SHOULD BE RECORDED AND GIVEN CONSIDERATION.

A questionnaire on books and supplies sent by the superintendent of schools to teachers invited suggestions on any matter pertaining to the schools. Questions were asked as to the books needed, preferred, disliked and not used. Aside from twenty requests to have one session in stormy weather, only three teachers out of three hundred had any suggestion to offer about actual teaching or class management. In a system having no school principals it is essential that teachers be on the alert to see needs, and to exercise initiative in making suggestions.

TEACHERS' ERRORS IN ENGLISH SUGGEST NEED OF SUPERVISION

These expressions were noted in a cursory reading of the teachers' suggestions referred to above:

"I ask for the additional copies of the above so that there are at least one copy for every two pupils."

"I only have eight copies of Nature Myths."

".....and therefore, if allowed to do so, should like the Carolyn Brook as Reader instead next year."

This suggests the possibility that additional supervision might safe-guard teachers against the use of faulty English, and that periodical examinations might not be out of place.

TEACHERS' CLASS REGISTER SHOULD BE REVISED

The present class register, as prescribed by the state, should be supplanted by a new form designated to overcome the following present defects:

Pages are so arranged that the teacher is obliged to re-write the names of all pupils every 30 days

No provision is made for:

Pupils' Addresses

Parents' names

School or town from which new pupils enter

Special comment or remarks

The book is too large in number of pages as well as in size

The superintendent states that, in the schools, he inspects the registers with one of the supervisors once each year. The registers should be called in to the central offices midway in the term and should be examined in detail by clerks for errors, omissions and other defects, and the results of this analysis should be presented to the superintendent. It is this type of inspection which is not done and which is well-nigh impossible, it is true, in Reading's offices as now organized.

OPPORTUNITY FOR USE OF MECHANICAL DEVICES TO SAVE CLERICAL LABOR.

The present form of class register is prescribed by the state, but the fact that an unwieldy book has been prescribed does not necessarily mean that the state authorities would not consent to the use of a more convenient and practical form of book, provided no attendance facts were omitted. The superintendent has obtained permission from the state education department to simplify this book, and by cutting a portion of the leaves to dispense with the re-writing of the children's names every month. The register should be reduced to an 8½ by 11-inch size so as to fit into an ordinary correspondence file. A much more definite record of the circumstances leading up to the withdrawal of pupils from school and of the disposal of pupils leaving a given class as well as of the school's efforts in behalf of the children needing special attention, should be provided in the revised register.

In the matter of all recording and accounting work in schools as well as in the administrative offices, there is a wide field for the reduction of clerical labor by means of mechanical devices such as:

- a. Loose leaf records
- b. Cards which make possible by different sorting, the assembling of several sorts of information from one original record

into one record

A particular type of record could only be recommended after a thorough revision of all educational records and after an agreement with the state authorities.

ATTENDANCE RECORDS SHOULD BE SIMPLIFIED.

The procedure employed in recording the enrollment and attendance of pupils is designed along lines which should convey practically all the information needed in school administration. In several important details, however, the present practice could be greatly improved. Printed directions from the state department instruct teachers to leave records blank if the pupil is present and to mark all absences with a single stroke. A blank space should

never be considered as a record. Furthermore, all absences should not be indicated by the same kind of a mark, but by symbols showing the causes of legal absences, and distinguishing between those which are excusable and inexcusable. Attendance figures, at the time of the first survey, were transcribed monthly to blanks which were sent to the Administration building, where the data was copied by a clerk into a large and unwieldy book. This necessitated the re-writing of the names of all teachers and school buildings each month. The form in use contained 58 separate columns and the chief clerk had added two. Of these 60 columns, only four were needed for the data required by the state authorities. The remaining items on this sheet were in themselves valuable enough, since they partially recorded withdrawals from the elementary grades and other statistical items, such as transfers received, cases of sickness, truancy, suspension, and visits by supervisors and parents. This method was changed in November, 1914, to a more convenient form. This information could be assembled and recorded with much less labor by the further use of pupils' permanent record cards. It is questionable whether it is necessary to record separate data for boys and girls each month in all these statistical reports.

PUPILS' PERMANENT RECORD CARDS

Individual record cards are kept for all pupils, showing the movements of the pupil from school to school. They are kept in duplicate in the classroom. When a pupil withdraws permanently, one card is sent to the central office with the date of withdrawal and cause indicated if the cause is known.

WITHDRAWALS FROM SCHOOL SHOULD BE STUDIED FOR POSSIBLE PREVENTION.

According to reports there were (1912-13) in the schools of Reading, 13,664 pupils enrolled, of whom 1,514 left during the year for the reasons given below:

Moved	555
Parochial	77
Died	29
Poor health.....	86
At home.....	87
Indefinite	38
Work	642

Thus it appears that 4.6% leave to enter employment in Reading, as compared with (917 or) 3.1% in Rochester, N. Y.

In Rochester there are five trade schools. It is thus pertinent to ask whether more provision could not be made for pupils who have lost interest in the regular course. It is to be noted that Reading school records specify "work" as a cause of withdrawal. Entering employment is a result, so far as the pupil is concerned, not a cause at all and it should not be so recorded.

The first step in the campaign is to ascertain the actual underlying causes such as:

- Poverty
- Parental coercion

Incapacity for further schooling

Discouragement

Indifference to the Opportunity offered by the schools

Failure of the school system to provide what the pupil or his parents think he needs

At the time of the survey, records did not show the efforts made to anticipate, prevent and redeem losses of this character, although a search through the schools would surely reveal much effort and many ways of combating elimination of which the public knows nothing.

It should be noted that, as a matter of statistics, it is misleading and inaccurate to combine in the same list losses due to removals from the city, for which the school is not responsible; poor health, for which the school may be partly responsible; and entering employment, for which the school may be wholly responsible if the pupil leaves merely because the school does not offer him what he needs.

VOCATIONAL COUNCIL

In the Spring of 1914, a beginning in this direction was made in the establishment of a Vocational Council. This is a most excellent move which should receive all possible encouragement and support, both moral and financial. From the superintendent's description of this council and its program of work, it would appear to be proceeding along right lines. There is still need for more thoroughgoing records of causes that lead up to the pupil's decision to leave school, and for expert vocational advice to pupils and teachers; there is much room for improving the course of study to include in the regular academic work more information about the sort of careers which are opened by various occupations; there is room for extending this work through the entire elementary and high school course. The possibilities of this vocational council would be greatly enhanced if the members had at their disposal the sort of information about pupils and schools which the most up-to-date records would give and which Reading at the present time does not have for its own use.

EDUCATION PROBLEM.

ool as well as to attempt to e, many cities have established work.

brings out the fact that Reading schools do not anticipate the needs of its youth by providing instruction specially designated to help boys and girls in the particular industries which many of them will enter. This does not imply that Reading schools should necessarily teach knitting or foundry practice, but it does imply that because Reading has these special industries, the schools of Reading should teach what is designed to help young people who will some day be engaged in these trades. Since the original survey short unit-courses in a number of vocational subjects have been established.

A complete investigation might well be made here, after the manner of the recent survey of the wood industry and clothing industry completed by

the Rochester Chamber of Commerce. The things which the Reading boy and girl will do in their trades should be set up on one side, the things the schools are teaching, on the other; and then the discrepancies between the two should be bridged by the introduction of Reading features into Reading schools. This cannot be done in a day or in a year, but a beginning may be made at once.

A few questions to be determined through such an industrial survey are suggested:

What do the youths of Reading do when they leave school

In their various occupations, what information do they need as to:

Sources of raw material	Uses made of finished product
	Geographical considerations involved

Properties of raw materials	Trade and commercial history
-----------------------------	------------------------------

How much and what part of this information do they receive in the schools

What further knowledge and better preparation can be given in the regular grammar and high schools

How can the regular elementary and high schools make apprentices more valuable to their employers and to themselves

The various industrial co-operative school systems of the country might be studied by the Reading school board, e. g., the Cincinnati part time plan, the New York evening trade school program, and the vocational work done in Fitchburg, Mass.

The progress of many cities in vocational education has been such in the last two or three years, that no city can properly lay claim to be doing anything worthy of the name of vocational training which has not a definitely organized system of shops, of vocationally applied academic instruction in the regular schools, some actual trade courses in the processes of industry and a program of part time instruction actually working in which apprentices in employment are released by their employers to receive some instruction in the schools, or in which schooling is brought into the shops. In addition to this the true basis for vocational courses offered by a school system is not the usual line of carpentry and metal work installed as a stock feature of the program, but the agreement with employers to hire a definite number of young people at the future date which marks the completion of the course the school intends to give. For example, in Rochester, N. Y., no vocational courses are offered unless the employers have promised to engage a certain number of apprentices and the registration is strictly limited to the number which the employers have agreed to use.

Reading's vocational council should be developed into a definitely organized department of vocational education with its own schools, administrative offices and faculty.

OVER AGE

The report of the superintendent of schools includes tables showing the ages of all pupils; the number of pupils of each age, and the ages of pupils in each grade. These data are obtained by sending mimeographed blanks to

each teacher to be filled out and returned. A set of such blanks was being sent out at the time this study was being made.

Over age should not be regarded as synonymous with retardation (as is the case in many cities including Reading), and should not be tabulated without reference to the length of time pupils have been in school, to the previous failures of pupils still in school and to the pupils who have left school. Reading age figures should be put upon a basis which tells the whole truth.

In addition to mis-stating actual facts, the present method of assembling age data is cumbrous in itself and places an unnecessary clerical burden upon teachers and central office clerks. Teachers should not be required to fill out blanks and circular letters throughout the year. The entire statistical system at the administration building and in the schools should be re-organized so as to enable teachers to furnish all necessary information about a pupil at the beginning and end of the term, and to do this without extra labor in connection with her regular enrollment reporting.

PROGRESS OF PUPILS THROUGH THE GRADES.

The progress of pupils through the various grades, considered as a matter of record, constitutes a striking example of the failure to use a vast amount of information in the possession of the school authorities which has been already assembled. Records are kept showing the number of pupils who are promoted and of those who fail of promotion in each term and in one school year.

Individual card records show when each pupil entered a given school or class, and how long that pupil remained in one grade or in one school building. These two classes of important information should be related to each other. At the present time the entire point to such records is lost, because the significant relation between these two sets of figures is not brought out. They should be combined so as to show not merely the number of pupils who fail or the number of schools attended by pupils, but also the rate at which each pupil progresses from the first to the eighth grade, and subsequently through the high school. This can be done readily by the preparation of simple age-grade progress charts, shown in the accompanying chart.

PROGRESS THROUGH SCHOOL					
1/2 YEAR UNDER AGE	NORMAL AGE	1/2 YEAR OVER AGE	1 YEAR OVER AGE	1 1/2 YEARS OVER AGE	
	• •				1 YEAR RAPID
	• •		•	• •	1/2 YEAR RAPID
• • •	• • •	• • •	• • •	•	NORMAL PROGRESS
	• • •	• •	• •	•	1/2 YEAR SLOW
		•	• •	•	1 YEAR SLOW

On this chart every child in a given class is located according to the two factors which determine whether or not he needs special attention or help:—
(1) his age and (2) the number of terms he has been in school.

Children normally enter and complete the elementary grades as follows:

Grade	Enter	Finish
1 A	6 to 6 1/2	6 1/2 to 7
1 B	6 1/2 to 7	7 to 7 1/2
2 A	7 to 7 1/2	7 1/2 to 8
2 B	7 1/2 to 8	8 to 8 1/2
	etc.	

The chart may represent any grade. The pupils of normal age are represented by dots placed between the heavy vertical lines; those one-half year below normal age are placed in the first vertical column to the LEFT of the normal; those one-half year, one year and one and one-half years over age are placed in the first, second and third columns respectively, to the RIGHT of the normal.

In the central horizontal column are plotted all pupils who have been in school the proper number of terms to reach or to complete a given grade. Some pupils reach a given grade in less than the normal time, while others require a much longer time to complete the same portion of the course. In the chart dots ABOVE the horizontal normal indicate pupils who have reached the grade in one-half or one year less than the normal time; dots BELOW the heavy horizontal lines indicate pupils who have taken more than the usual time to reach the grade charted. Thus the nine spaces on the chart show:

1. Upper left corner—Young and rapid
2. Upper center—Normal age, but rapid
3. Upper right corner—Old, but rapid
4. Left center—Young, but normal progress
5. Center—Normal as to both age and progress
6. Right center—Old, but making normal progress
7. Lower left corner—Young, but slow
8. Lower center—Normal age, but slow
9. Lower right corner—Both over age and slow

TEACHERS' DESK EQUIPMENTS INADEQUATE.

In four grammar schools visited, the teachers' desk equipment was inadequate in the following respects:

No special place provided for class register

No facilities for keeping pupils' individual record cards; one teacher had the cards tied with string and kept in a closet

Small card cabinets should be provided for card records, and cabinets or drawers suited to the size of the various record books, and blanks in use should be supplied. This, however, does not mean the purchase of expensive office furniture.

High school principals have up-to-date office equipment.

CARE OF BUILDINGS

SANITARY DEFECTS

The superintendent of buildings and two janitors interviewed stated that no oil or sweeping compound was used except in the two high schools and in the new 18-room elementary school building. Dusting was done with dry cloths. (In January, 1915, oiled clothes were used.)

Two schools, which were visited by the investigators at the time of the original survey, were found to have antiquated and unsatisfactory toilet facilities. The particular type of flushing apparatus in use has been discontinued. (Plants and plumbing regulations generally prohibit its use. It is taled in schools equipped with

sanitously clean and odorless they gators to light matches to find in toilets have replaced the old ones in all cases.)

The superintendent of buildings states that separate cloak rooms are not provided for boys and girls.

At the time of the survey paper towels were used only in the Girls' High School. (They are now used in all schools.)

Sanitary drinking fountains were provided only in the Boys' High School. (They have now been installed in all schools.)

Pupils throughout the city had individual aluminum drinking cups. The manner in which these cups were actually used should have been investigated

thoroughly and instructions given by teachers and control exercised to prevent unsanitary practice. (Sanitary drinking fountains making drinking cups unnecessary now installed in all schools.)

Steam is used for heating in twelve buildings; elsewhere hot air is used.

Thermostats are installed in twenty buildings to regulate the temperature. Temperature noted in four rooms in the same building was 60, 70, 71 and 74 degrees while recitations were in progress. The air in two rooms was sultry; in one decidedly pure; and in one neither oppressive nor noticeably fresh. These conditions existing in the same building at the same time, indicate one or more of the following situations, which a thorough investigation should determine:

Instructions on heating and ventilating not given

Instructions not obeyed

Teacher does not know when air is fresh or sultry

Teacher does not pay attention to the thermometer

In a fifth room in the same building there was no thermometer; and the teacher "guessed it had been broken." Experiments looking to the bettering of these conditions are being conducted.

Lighting in all classrooms visited came from the rear and from one side; in three rooms it was noted that the inner front corner of the room was dark, owing to the position of the side window toward the rear. One teacher stated that the rear lights had seriously affected her eyes since the beginning of the school year. In the normal class the pupils were grouped on the darker side of the room, with plenty of vacant seats near the windows. The superintendent states that this condition was bettered in 1914.

SITTINGS

In five rooms noted, one was equipped with seats all of the same size; two had two different sizes and two had four sizes of seats.

FINANCIAL RECORDS

HOW THE RECORDS WERE EXAMINED.

The examination of the financial and business methods was based on an inspection of books and forms and interviews with the secretary, the treasurer, the superintendent of buildings and the superintendent of supplies. The examination was made to determine whether sufficient information was available for the guidance of the board of education as to the cost of instruction and supervision and of the administration, operation and maintenance of the school system. No attempt was made by the surveyors to locate extravagance or waste. The records, however, were examined to ascertain whether they would show waste, if any existed.

BUDGET ESTIMATES.

In May of each year budget estimates are prepared by four committees:

I. Committee on property and sanitation

2. Committee on teachers and instruction
3. Committee on supplies
4. Committee on finance

The estimates of the first three committees are examined and revised by the committee on finance, which recommends to the full board the appropriation of the amounts as revised and approved. The sum thus recommended is appropriated by a separate resolution "for the purpose set forth * * * and subject to the future direction of the board."

The minutes of the board do not give evidence of any discussion of budget estimates or recommendations but the clerk stated that full discussion took place in committee meetings.

DETAILED ESTIMATES.

1. The property and sanitation committee's estimate shows for each building the nature of the work or repairs to be made, and the amount desired for each item. The estimate is arranged by wards, as shown below:

Second Ward.

Thomas Severn Building—general repairs.....	\$ 50.00
Ninth and Spruce building—general repairs.....	50.00
Bingaman and Orange building — Window, south side.....	\$ 25.00
Painting two rooms and two halls.....	150.00
	————— \$ 175.00

The estimate concludes with the following summary:

Total specific repairs.....	\$ 8,710.00
Contingent repairs.....	1,290.00
Janitors' salaries.....	30,000.00
Medical inspection	3,500.00
	—————
	\$ 43,500.00

The repair estimate is shown in sufficient detail. The two lump sums for janitors' salaries and for medical inspection would be more valuable to the board if they showed full particulars of the persons, the period during which their services would be required and the compensation therefore.

The quality and cost of supplies, if any, included under medical inspection

under the heading of buildings and
ceter classification.

2. The teachers' estimate shows for each general rank of position, a lump sum "estimate," together with certain "increases by committee," e. g.

Items	Estimates	Increases by Committee		Total
Teachers, Boys' High School.	\$ 22,600.00	\$ 400.00		\$ 23,000.00
Supervisors	5,150.00	500.00		5,650.00
Grade Teachers	157,002.50	6,630.00		163,632.50
Additional teachers, graded....	2,300.00			
Additional teachers, high school	1,200.00			4,500.00
Physical Instructor.....	1,000.00			
Text books	8,500.95			8,500.95

A "key to increases" gives in detail the names of persons for whom \$2,000 is requested "by rule of board" and \$1,440 for "increases by committees," but committee increases alone amount to \$8,070.

Detailed estimates should be submitted showing the number of principals and teachers in salary grade and the rate of compensation they receive. These estimates should show comparisons of existing conditions with requests for appropriations for the ensuing year, all increases being clearly indicated by name and title.

Such a statement would form a basis for intelligently passing upon the needs for additional appropriations.

Data as to the increase in the number of pupils, any new responsibilities assumed by the educational authorities and additional opportunities offered by the board to Reading children would be valuable as supporting evidence.

The estimate for the retirement fund should be supported by statements showing the present condition of the fund and its requirements for the coming year.

The estimate (requisition) for text books shows the number, title, unit price and cost of books for which an appropriation is requested.

There is no evidence, however, to show that the purchase of such text books is necessary.

As a basis for an appropriation, it is essential that the stock of books on hand, the estimated number of books required to replace old copies or additional copies for new pupils, etc., be stated. If this information were available an appropriation for text books could be made with some degree of certainty and consequent economy.

3. The supplies committee's estimate is given in great detail, quantities and unit prices being shown for separate items.

The lump sum request of \$10,500 for manual-training supplies is unwarranted unless supported by details. It should have been divided into smaller sums for specific purposes. It is understood that certain detailed information is submitted to the committee when the estimates are under discussion. Such data should be incorporated in the appropriations in order that expenditures may be properly controlled.

The request of \$10,500 for the purchase of coal might be considerably reduced if coal were purchased on the basis of heat unit content (the "B. T. U." basis) rather than by weight.

The requests for stationery and other supplies could be passed upon with much more accuracy if such items were reduced to cost-per-pupil units.

4. The finance and accounts committee's estimate contains an item of

\$41,000 for sinking fund installments and interest, together with \$14,000 for officials' and clerks' salaries and \$2,500 for general expenses. The salaries and general expenses should be given in detail and related to the past expenses and proposed work.

PROPOSED FORM OF ESTIMATE.

The entire school budget should be rearranged to show expenditures for the previous year and for the first six months of the current year as compared with amounts requested for the coming year. These items should be reduced to a per-pupil cost basis and related to the number of pupils participating in past, present and proposed expenditures. The board is now unable to point to the specific reason or circumstance which makes a given request imperative. There is no reason to question the board's intimate knowledge of the necessity for any budget item, but in the present estimate the board does not give itself credit for having valid reasons for its requests.

PAY ROLLS.

The payroll is prepared by the secretary, who keeps a payroll book containing the items arranged as shown below:

Name of Building (School)

Date of Appointment	Name of Employee	Amount Deducted for Pension Fund	Principal's Extra Salary	Salary

"Principals" receive 50 cents additional each month for each teacher in the building.

The data from which the secretary makes up the payrolls are supplied from the "principals" reports on teachers' absences. These are entered in a second book showing name; the period of absence, divided as to sickness or other cause; pension fund deduction and salary.

In addition to the pension fund deduction, teachers receive half pay for days lost on account of sickness up to the twentieth day's absence, after which all pay stops. No physician's certificate is required in confirmation of the necessity for absence. Absentees lose their entire salary for days lost for causes other than sickness.

Voucher blanks provide for certification by the chairman of the finance and accounts committee, attest by the secretary and approval by the president of the board.

If mechanical, labor-saving devices were installed to facilitate this detailed work, a very desirable improvement would be effected.

SALARY ACCRUALS.

Only general memoranda are made of salary accruals when the budget is being prepared, and these are not preserved after the accrual item has once been estimated. Because of the lack of a definite system of accounting for accruals, the board is not in a position to know how much money remains unexpended by reason of the fact that absent teachers are replaced by substitutes.

It is suggested that in the future, the form of estimates and budget for the school district be arranged on lines similar to those suggested for city departments. This matter is referred to at length in the report on the city department of finance.

NEED FOR IMPROVED CLASSIFICATION OF EXPENDITURES.

For the guidance of the board it is necessary that complete expenditure records be maintained. The present system lacks proper classification and important details, which lack detracts from its value as an administrative aid.

The secretary now issues a detailed statement of expenditures containing the following segregation of expenses by schools and administration buildings:

- Day teachers
- Evening teachers
- Janitors
- Evening janitors
- Fuel
- Gas lighting
- Electric lighting
- Electric power
- Supplies
- Text-books
- Equipment
- Books—Teachers' library
- Insurance
- Sewer connections
- Building extensions
- Repairs
- Labor
- Painting

Plumbing
Printing
Domestic science supplies
Graduation exercises
Social center
Telephones
Interest

In this statement the following items, constituting 30 per cent. of the total expenditures, are given in lump sums, the amounts not being apportioned in any way:

Supervisors
Teachers emeritus
Manual training
Normal school
City institute
Teachers' institute
Printing (general)
Miscellaneous supplies
Kindergarten
Playgrounds
Museum
Dispensary
Officials' salaries
Delinquent tax collectors' fees
Miscellaneous expenses
Enumeration of school children
State tax on bonds
Sinking funds—Bond issue
Sinking funds—Interest
Temporary loans

This statement, however, distinguishes between day and evening teachers, day and evening janitors, gas and electric lighting and other subdivisions appearing in the list. With this beginning in the segregation of expenses, the school board could readily rearrange its accounts so as to furnish much important information which can now be computed only by laborious analysis, if it all.

in recording expenditures:
should be grouped to show at a

- d—Operation of school plant
- e—Maintenance of school plant
- f—Capital acquisition and construction of properties and equipment

2. The lump sum items should be distributed among the schools, either by direct charge or by pro rata apportionment.

These steps are very desirable, since existing accounts do not show directly the cost of any of the six functions mentioned above or the complete cost of running any one school or office.

ESTABLISHED CLASSIFICATIONS SHOULD BE FOLLOWED.

The accounts already distinguish between supplies which are consumed when used and equipment which should last for a number of years. However, the secretary states that the practice is to charge all small items to the miscellaneous account, irrespective of their nature. Thus, the miscellaneous total includes such items as printing, office furniture, garbage cans, shovels, wash basins, ink, flags, art models and piano tuning representing supplies, repairs, personal services and permanent equipment. Under the regular heading "equipment" are charged new articles purchased without reference to the important distinction that many are used in connection with the restoration of school property to its original condition and so are properly chargeable to repairs and replacements.

RECORDS SHOULD BE CURRENTLY STUDIED AND USED.

As has been stated, the scope of the survey did not include such detailed examination of the books as would disclose evidence of extravagance or waste. But it may be said that present records are not sufficient to indicate excessive expenditures on the one hand or insufficient funds on the other. One school might waste and another might be in need, but the present accounts would not show it.

Proper financial records would show discrepancies and point out the schools where they occur. The cost figures of every school should be brought currently to the board for scrutiny, investigation and subsequent action in the interests of economy.

SCHOOL TAX ASSESSMENT.

School taxes are separately collected as provided by law. The present law allows a rate of twenty mills on the dollar, based on property valuations as assessed by the city authorities. The schools now receive five mills on the dollar—one-fourth of the legal maximum. The assessed value of taxable property in the territory known as the "Reading School District" is approximately fifty-six million dollars. Taxes are payable between July 1st and September 30th, after which 5 per cent. is added. Taxpayers, upon receipt of a notice, call at the school administration building and pay their taxes to the treasurer of the board of school directors. In addition to the tax on real estate, a personal tax of one dollar is collected each year from all male inhabitants of twenty-one years and over within the district.

The City of Altoona, Pa., which is a city in the same class as Reading, has already consolidated the collection of school taxes with those of the city, thus centralizing the payment of taxes in the office of the city treasurer. Such a procedure would undoubtedly be a great convenience to the citizens of Reading. Incidentally, the school taxes could be included on the same bill with city taxes, and the cost of clerical service, which now runs into thousands of dollars a year, could be reduced at least 50 per cent.

PURCHASING.

The secretary is the purchasing agent of the board; the superintendent of buildings and the superintendent of schools are actively associated with the secretary, the former in regard to the purchase of fuel and repair materials, the latter regarding class-room supplies.

After bids have been advertised and contracts awarded, the bulk of the supplies are purchased each year at one time during the summer. Only a small quantity of supplies are purchased at any other time during the year.

Orders are written in triplicate (1) to the vendor, (2) filed in secretary's office after checking with bill, (3) to the person receiving the goods.

No price list is kept of the various articles and commodities purchased. The secretary states that prices are considered correct if they correspond in general to what has been paid previously; furthermore, that he has no knowledge of prices paid in other cities.

The secretary should have for his guidance a current price list of all commodities in card index form. Studied, followed and applied by the secretary, such a record would tend to insure economies. Teachers should be instructed as to the cost of materials and supplies used in the schools.

The form of requisitions made to the secretary and on stores could be considerably simplified. The present form of requisition on stores containing almost a complete list of supplies customarily required by a teacher, must result in the purchase and withdrawal of supplies which are not actually needed. If the requisition form were printed so as to leave a blank space for the insertion of a description of articles desired, a saving would soon be apparent.

It is suggested that a system of purchasing similar to that already installed for the City of Reading be adopted by the board of school directors.

STOREKEEPING.

A central supply depository is maintained in charge of a superintendent of supplies. Requisitions on such stores are made on a form designed to include all articles which the schools require. No supporting data accompany these requisitions. The superintendent of supplies states that in general all requests are granted upon the theory that teachers never ask for supplies unless they are needed.

ions as granted, and the quantity of articles and providing monthly

This record merely shows the -house each month.

in a supply disbursement book, which shows the quantity of supplies sent to each teacher in the city. The teachers are arranged by grades and not by school buildings. The only receipt which shows the total supplies sent to a teacher is a summary of text-books distributed in the four upper grades.

Weiler's Printing House ~~440~~ 440 Court St., Reading, Pa.

Gaylord Bros.
Makers
Syracuse, N. Y.
PAT. JUN. 24, 1908

